

Message Text

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R 060530Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9230

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 2273

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, AEMR, CB, FR, US

SUBJ: FRENCH HOSPITAL PERSONNEL CONSIDERING EVACUATION OF
DEPENDENTS

REF: PHNOM PENH 2182

1. EVENING FEBRUARY 5 I MET AT HIS REQUEST WITH DR. REVIL, HEAD DOCTOR FRENCH CALMETTE HOSPITAL. HE HAD RECEIVED SAME DAY NOTICE FROM FRENCH EMBASSY ENCOURAGING FRENCH COMMUNITY TO EVACUATE WIVES AND CHILDREN (REFTEL). HE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT ADVICE HE SHOULD GIVE TO HIS STAFF SINCE SOME OF THE DOCTORS HAD DEPENDENTS IN PHNOM PENH AND OTHER STAFF MEMBERS OF THE HOSPITAL WERE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PERSONNEL WHO ALSO HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED BY FRENCH EMBASSY TO DEPART TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. SIMILAR QUERY HAD BEEN ADDRESSED TO DCM BY PROF. PIQUARD WHO HAD TREATED DCM IN DECEMBER AND HAD EARLIER THIS WEEK BRILLIANTLY DIAGNOSED USAID DIRECTOR'S SERIOUS ILL-
MENT.

2. DR. REVIL ELABORATED THAT AS A RESULT OF FRENCH
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CHARGE PAVEC'S ACTION, FRENCH TEACHERS HAVE MET AT THE

LYCEE AND DECIDED TO CLOSE FRENCH HIGH SCHOOL ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 UNTIL MARCH 3. SUSPENSION HAS BEEN BILLED AS "EARLY EASTER VACATION." THIS WILL PERMIT A CERTAIN NUMBER OF THOSE WHO ARE UNEASY ABOUT PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION TO DEPART AND AWAIT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS. UNDERSTAND FRENCH TEACHERS WILL MOSTLY HOLIDAY IN THAILAND OR LAOS. EXPERIENCE LAST YEAR HAD BORNE OUT THAT ONCE FRENCH HIGH SCHOOLS CLOSED IT IS DIFFICULT TO REOPEN IT AGAIN, FOR TEACHERS SOON GROW WEARY OF WAITING IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES FOR MILITARY SITUATION TO IMPROVE IN PHNOM PENH AND RETURN TO FRANCE, FROM WHERE IT IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO BRING THEM BACK. SO FAR ABOUT 100 WIVES AND CHILDREN OF FRENCH COMMUNITY HAVE LEFT CAMBODIA.

3. I TOLD THE HEAD OF CALMETTE HOSPITAL THAT WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR WHAT HIS STAFF HAS DONE FOR THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN THE PAST AND I WOULD HOPE HE WOULD DO EVERYTHING HE CAN TO KEEP THE HOSPITAL FUNCTIONING SMOOTHLY. OBVIOUSLY WE COULD NOT ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FRENCH MEDICAL STAFF IN CASE OF EMERGENCY BUT I PROMISED TO KEEP HIM CLOSELY INFORMED ON WHAT WE AMERICANS PLAN TO DO WITH OUR DEPENDENTS SO THEY WILL NOT BE MAKING THEIR DECISIONS ON THE BASIS OF RUMORS OR BAD INFORMATION. I ALSO HINTED THAT TO THE EXTENT USAID AIRPLANE FLYING BETWEEN BANGKOK AND PHNOM PENH HAS SPACE AND POCHENTONG REMAINS OPEN, WE COULD ALWAYS TRY TO PUT ONE OR TWO DOCTOR'S WIVES ON IT. DCM GAVE VERY MUCH THE SAME KIND OF ADVICE TO DR. PIQUARD. IN SHORT, AS LONG AS THE AIRFIELD IS OPEN HERE WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP OUT THE TWELVE DEPENDENTS OF THE MEDICAL STAFF AT THE FRENCH HOSPITAL BUT WE COULD NOT MAKE ANY FIRM PROMISES NOR COULD WE ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY WHATSOEVER IF THE SITUATION DETERIORATES BEYOND POINT WHERE FIXED WING AIRCRAFT CAN BE USED.

4. WE ARE STILL TRYING TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN HERE TO KEEP FOREIGN COMMUNITY AS CALM AS POSSIBLE UNDER THE EXISTING MILITARY CIRCUMSTANCES. FAILURE OF FANK TO KEEP MEKONG OPEN HAS DEPRESSED MORALE CONSIDERABLY AMONG
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FOREIGNERS. WE STILL HAVE OUR FEW DEPENDENTS HERE (LESS THAN 10) AND HOPE THAT THIS STIFF-UPPER-LIP ATTITUDE WILL INFUSE OTHERS WITH SOME CONFIDENCE WITHOUT MAKING THEM RECKLESS. THERE IS HOWEVER ONE BIG DIFFERENCE: WE HAVE FIXED WING AND ROTARY ASSETS IN NEIGHBORING THAILAND AT OUR DISPOSAL. OTHER EMBASSIES ARE NOT SO FORTUNATE. ANOTHER DIFFERENCE IS THAT WE HAVE NO CHILDREN PRESENT, SO NEED NOT BASE OUR DECISIONS ON AVAILABILITY OF

SCHOOLING.
DEAN

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